

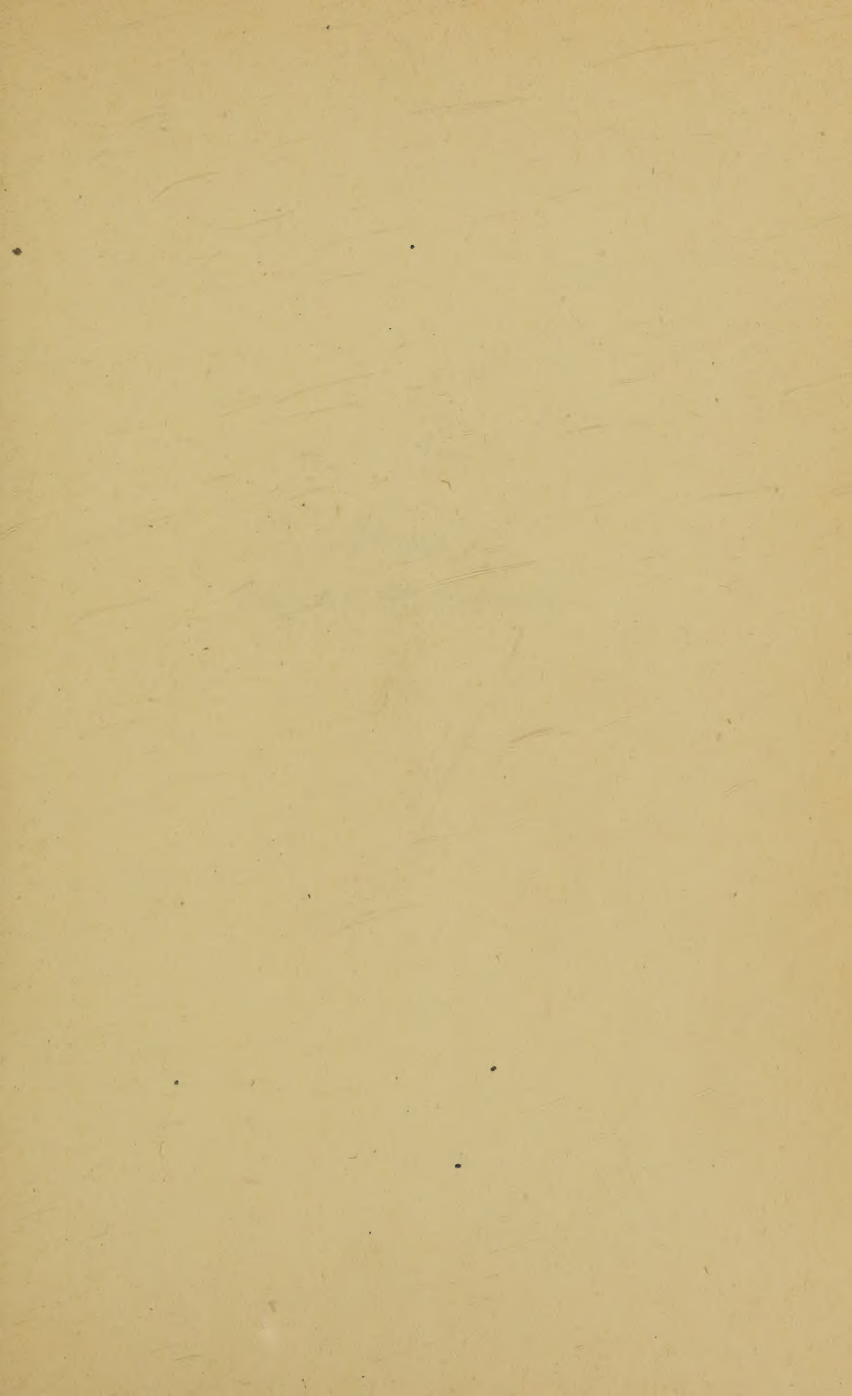
Poems
English & Scottish

Hamish Hendry

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Poems
English & Scottish

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Poems
English & Scottish

By

HAMISH HENDRY

Author of "Red Apple and Silver Bells"
"Burns from Heaven" "A Child's London"
"A Scots Dominie," &c.



BLACKIE & SON LIMITED

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TO
THREE GOOD WOMEN
Mother : Sister : Wife
THIS BOOK IS GRATEFULLY
DEDICATED

NOTE

In this Selected and Collected Edition of my Poems a certain number, not previously published, have been added; while a few have been revised. All the other verses have been published in:—"Burns from Heaven", "A Scots Dominie", "Red Apple and Silver Bells", and "A Child's London".

H. H.

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ENGLISH POEMS

Sun - Tan

A Midsummer-Day's Dream

Noon: with the stark sun throbbing in a blaze
Of molten light; low hills aswim with haze;
Horizon-clouds dusk-soft i' the sullen heat;
A dim, moist land, rank-green to where the wheat
Pours yellow torrent on the slope; with line
Of sky-gapped firs sombre against the shine.
No stir of life, save where yon reaper reaps
Solitary; soundless his white steel leaps
In the bog-grass; patient, with plash of foot
Monotonous he goes. The birds are mute;
Yet unto me—prone in the matted grass,
Heedless of aught the hot hour brings to pass—
Cometh a drift of song; a wayward note,
Wherewith the singer seems to dance and float:

English Poems

I follow the World with Frolic-kiss,
Kiss of a laughing Lover;
I go where I may, woo whom I wis:
Sure never merrier Life than this
Can Earth or Air discover!

I was a page in Titania's train,
Loved of the Queen and petted;
I led the Revels in moonlit lane
Where shadows mixed; but I grew fain
Of lustier life, and fretted.

Wanton, in sooth, was the Fay Queen's Court;
Goodly the smooth green spaces;
Gaily we rode in roystering sort;
Yet I grew fain of winsomer sport,
Bedight in blyther graces.

It was the hour when stars went wan,
And Fairies home had ridden;
When dewy silence lay on the lawn
Where the dance had stirred—I waited the Dawn
Deep in May-blossom hidden!

For I had woven of wayward whim
A fairy web of treason;
And thus, when the Hour sent light abrim
I waited the strong, sweet will of Him
Who rules the brighter season.

Sun-Tan

A little grey Wind slipped by, and shook
The blossoms all awhisper;
The Dark crept softly from nook to nook;
The Dawn swept in and smote the brook
Whitelier yet, and crisper.

All hushed in the white May-bloom I lay,
A dusk Thing chilled and chidden,
With thought that I was a foolish Fay—
When soft! the Sun's voice, stirring the spray,
Atween the leaves was thridden.

Aslant and warm was the message sent:
"Thou shalt be mine hereafter;
The noontide blue it shall be thy Tent;
Thy name *Sun-Tan*;" here the King's voice went
In ripples of brown laughter.

I gat me out from the May-flower's mid,
Brisk with a morning valour;
Aswing on the Spray, with winking lid,
I felt me free of the Day, and rid
Of creeping moon-bred pallor;

Forever free of the Day; to dance
While mellow tunes are pipen;
To weave the fields in a golden trance;
And between the vines to glint askance
When glossy juices ripen;

English Poems

To follow the World with Frolic-kiss,
Kiss of a laughing Lover;
To go where I may, woo whom I wis:
Sure never merrier Life than this
Can Earth or Air discover!

I love the lovers of open Sky.
Oh! many they, and motley!
All easy friends of an honest eye,
Who toss me greeting as I go by
Racing the South Wind hotly:

The Gipsy tenting beneath the bough
Low-bent with hazel cluster;
The Reaper at rest with shaded brow;
The Sailor guiding a lazy prow
O'er seas of windless lustre;

With straying Lovers 'tween trellised bines,
Bright as they go together;
With swaying Dancers beneath hot vines;
With Shepherd Lad who idly twines
A bluebell with the heather.

The Children love me; my way is meek
With young brows whitely simple;
And many a tender noontide freak
I set i' the smooth of a rosy cheek,
With glowing dance and dimple.

Sun-Tan

The wrinkled Elders I woo; to win
Smiles of a welcome comer;
In leafy haunt from the household din
We lurk together; till blood erst thin
Throbs with an ancient Summer.

Oh! fairest thing is the Human face,
Sad though it be or merry;
And a winsome joy for me to trace
A touch of shining, to add a grace
Soft as a sun-ripe berry.

To follow the World with Frolic-kiss,
Kiss of a laughing Lover;
To go where I may, woo whom I wis:
Sure never merrier Life than this
Can Earth or Air discover!

Peace

The red sun passes into sight,
In lateness of this autumn morn;
The long street takes its slanted light
In settled stillness, Sabbath born:
For toiling men from toiling cease,
And the great city lies in peace.

The house-roofs glisten, white with rime;
The house-fires lift their shafted smoke;
From far there comes the belfry's chime
That starts the week-day hammer-stroke:
But toiling men from toiling cease,
And the far-chiming falls on peace.

Yon throstle pipes its prison-song
In cadenced clearness full and sweet;
In bursts of singing loud and long
It stirs the echo of the street:
When toiling men from toiling cease,
A bird's note deepeneth the peace.

Peace

Sing out, brave bird, behind thy bar!
So will I add a note to thine:
Our mated music shall not mar
The sacred day; nor yours nor mine:
When toiling men from toiling cease,
We singers claim the hours of peace.

The mellow sunlight brings to thee
Remembrance of red autumn woods;
My thought, unburdened, brings to me
Home—and its hallowed neighbourhoods:
Where fisher-folk from toiling cease
And sea-horizons spread their peace.

I see the white church on the shore;
The dawn, red-dripping on the waves;
The night-mist rising, chill and hoar,
Above the hamlet's lonely graves:
The toiling tides that never cease;
The rime-white mounds in rankèd peace.

My old home by the Nor'land Sea!
Thy love within my heart is set,
Thy beauty lingers long with me;
I scorned thee once; I love thee yet:
When toiling men from toiling cease,
Their hearts turn home for perfect peace.

A City Pastoral

Look down, white summer moon, look down,
From out thy place of starry quiet;
See where the red lights o' the town
Throb through the midnight riot.

There, on the still slope of the night,
Thy stars about thee touched with pallor,
How looks it from that deep calm height,
This coil of human squalor?

Thy soft white radiance slants the street,
Sifts down these dark unhappy places;
Shines through the gas-glare and the heat,
On haggard sin-grimed faces.

Say, since thy climbing slakens where
Orion may not follow after—
Say, dost thou hear strike on the air
Shrieks, ravelled up with laughter?

Oh, summer moon, how looks it then,
Seen from these dusk-soft dreamy levels?

A City Pastoral

Doth it not cross thy calm that men
Reel, maddened into devils?

Nay: though a woman's shriek yet shrills
In stifled echoes down this alley,
Thy white flame tops the twilight hills
High o'er a northern valley.

Sure it is peace to look upon
Thy slow light sloping down the passes;
Gleam of thy going on grey stone,
With shimmer on wet grasses.

Thy presence keeps the quiet sky;
Thy glimmered light goes on the meadows,
Where drowsy sheep together lie
Silent, beside their shadows.

So while the valley seems to swim
Spacious beneath thy loosened splendour,
There spreads a sound of evening hymn;
Treble, and clear, and tender

With children's voices; and the song
Is that old Galilean story
Which Bethlem's shepherds heard the throng
Chant in the sudden glory.

English Poems

“ Peace and Goodwill o’er all the earth,”
Along the moonlit slope is drifted
By voices, at a cottar’s hearth
On northern hills, uplifted.

And thou art *here*, O summer moon,
Radiant above this city’s riot!
Thou who hast heard the children’s tune
Drift on that valley’s quiet.

Through a Church Window

Without the May sun shone; within
The preacher spun his shining text
With poor grey words; I heard him spin
His drowsy platitudes unvexed.
The gracious sunlight made me win
Praise for this world—he praised the next.

Without I saw the dusk street shine
With soft Spring light; above the drone
Of future bliss came clear, divine
Laughter of little children; prone
To make all happy omens mine,
I knew man's world was still God's own.

For lo! these children fared, footsore,
In ragged, laughing, straggling bands;
Back to the city's smoke they bore
The hedgerow's blossom in their hands:
Such country wealth to them was more
Than all the wealth of fabled lands.

English Poems

I watched them pass; my eyes went dim.

With tears of some strange, high delight;

These children's lives were hard and grim,

Yet earth had beauty in their sight;

They knew, these waifs, the ways of Him

Who stars the thorn with red and white!

The Blind Musician

She sits, where meet the public ways,
Nor craves the public boon,
But patient-wise she sits and plays
A fitful, wheezing tune.

Her numb hands fumble at the keys;
Her feet to quick airs beat;
While March wind blows across her knees
Keen gusts of bitter sleet.

A mild grace lies about the lass;
Her set face shines full clear;
Yet most men take her tune, and pass—
While no Christ passes here.

The grey cathedral near her glooms
'Gainst gaps of windy light;
Behind her gleams the city's tombs
Ghost-like upon the height;

The city's tumult round her drifts;
Above drive smoke-dulled skies—
To these, to all, her face uplifts
The pathos of blind eyes.

Vision

Where careless diggers dug their clay
Was left a deep red pit;
Hard by men's daily path it lay,
Yet none regarded it.

Betimes the heaven brimmed it bright
With clear grey rain; its red
Waste heart grew quick; it throbbed with light;
It lived that was so dead.

Within its ragged rim it held
The sky's wide pomp; it drew
Sad beauty from the stars of eld;
The last vain cloud it knew;

Quick morning brimmed it up with gold;
The bannered noon blew there;
There twilight spread a crimson fold;
Its fitful moons were fair.

Yet still no man regarded it
Save one rapt soul; to him
The visions in that sombre pit
Outshone the Cherubim!

On Cathkin Braes

Fresh winds afoot: white clouds afloat;
The free sun fares on high;
These Cathkin Braes are glanced with light,
Are gloomed where shadows fly;
While here alow, and there aloft
The wild, shrill peesweeps cry.

Nor sun, nor clouds, nor flying shade,
Nor aught of these I wist;
The piping wind, the peesweeps' cry,
To naught of these I list;
For my heart is with yon city
Grim-muffled in grey mist.

Yon city of Sanct Mungo; mine
While heart within me beats;
Mine, when the tide of life drove high;
Mine, now the tide retreats;
For I spilled my life like water,
O city! in thy streets.

English Poems

Not always did I love thee; yea,
In youth a youth's despair
Rang curses where thy red nights burned
Ghastly thro' sheeted glare;
Where great white stars reeled in sick fogs;
Where sad men spectral were.

Not always did I curse thee; nay,
In youth a youth's high hope
Saw visions in thy thronging streets;
Saw shining pathways ope
Thro' ragged smoke; saw leal, brave hearts
Climb duty's laboured slope.

Love met me in thy midst; young Love
Touched thy black streets to white;
Caught all thy clamoured trappings
And tuned them to delight;
For thy life throbbed bridal music—
Bright as our loves were bright.

Death met me in thy midst; old Death
Treads where thy toilers tread;
Jars through thy junketings, and glooms
Though bright flags burn o'erhead;
O city! through thy laughing streets
I bore my silent dead.

On Cathkin Braes

Thus love and death, despair and hope,
Have taught me what thou art!
Thy stormy life strikes deeper than
The babble of the mart;
Not all of traffic is thy thought,
Not all of stone thy heart.

O city of Sanct Mungo! Mine
While heart within me beats;
Mine, when the tide of life drove high;
Mine, now the tide retreats;
For I spilled my life like water,
O city! in thy streets.

Blow, North Wind, Blow!

Blow, North wind, blow! from shores where white
 seas thunder

 Round shining snows; blow strong, wild wind,
 blow free;

Let thy shrill bugles shriek, as bergs that sunder
 Shriek, shuddering to the sea!

Through days that lagged as years yon sun has
 sickened

 Behind foul fogs; its light made mock of light
Where spectral men crawled slow; where raw noon
 thickened

 To chill mist-clotted night:

Night where the stars were dead; where vapours
 blotted

 The mystic glamour from the ancient sky;
Where sodden fields lay dark with sheaves that
 rotted;

 Where sad men ceased to sigh!

Blow, North Wind, Blow!

But lo! this stalwart wind has blown, and harried
The nightmare fog back to its grim foul den;
While hardy joy, and timid hope that tarried,
Dance in the hearts of men!

Beyond Lochaber

The sun made merry with the sea;
 In smile and laugh they sped the jest;
And we went sailing, sailing free,
 Among the islands of the West:
Light on our hearts lay human ills,
As blue haze on the Summer hills.

We were a varied jocund crew,
 Our many lives a tangled web;
Our friendships in the sunshine grew,
 Our flowing laughter knew no ebb:
Whate'er of good our lives might lack,
That day we left a sunny track.

We scare the lonely island-peace
 With breezy jesting leeward blown;
Of care our thought has sweet surcease—
 The wide horizon is our own:
Afar the Coolins dimly show
In the thick sunshine's throbbing glow.

Beyond Lochaber

A hamlet on our larboard lies
 Within the shadow of a hill;
In gleams of white, all dreamy-wise,
 It takes the sunshine warm and still:
The blue smoke, rising, thinly stirs
Against the blackness of the firs.

But see! the captain's silent beck—
 Our flag dips half-way down the mast;
A sudden hush creeps o'er the deck,
 While slowly, slowly is borne past
A burden black; no word is said—
We stand in presence of the dead.

A boat with harsh and measured oar,
 Comes slowly through the Summer sea;
A wail floats wildly from the shore,
 And passes seaward waveringly:
The sunny peace is swiftly rent
From flashing sea to firmament.

All hushfully we gather round;
 The coffined dead goes down the side
With reverend hands; no speech, no sound,
 Save the long wail that wavers wide:
God! see there twinkling in the sun—
“ *Flora Mackenzie, twenty-one!*”

English Poems

And that is all: the steamship throbs,
The boat goes on the whitened waves;
While strong men here choke down their sobs,
And see the grass on far-off graves:
Slow dies the creaking of the oar,
Slow dies the wail along the shore.

The sun made merry with the sea,
In smile and laugh they sped the jest;
While we went sailing, sailing free,
Among the islands of the West:
But on our hearts lay human ills,
As thunder-clouds on Summer hills.

The Nor'land Sea

Oh! sea of my youth thy spell is strong
To weave me many a shining thought;
The mystic trouble that stirs in song
Takes motion when thy spell is wrought:
As a stranger here unloved, unknown,
As I walk these grey-grim streets alone,
From far away in the North Countree
Comes many a haunting lilt to me
From the old Nor'land Sea.

A waste grey sea and a wide grey sky;
Salt wind from the eastward keenly set;
The white gulls sweeping afar and anigh;
An old man mending an old brown net;
A child at play by the open door;
A voice that shall sound for me no more—
Oh! faint and far though these things be
They live with the love that beat for me
By the old Nor'land Sea.

English Poems

Oh! sea of my youth, thy life is here
Where now my wandering feet abide,
Yea, I hear thy loud note ringing clear
In this Southland city's human tide;
In an ebb and flow of thunder-tones
That beat for ever along its stones;
In its brooding gulfs that sunless be,
In its unhusht sobbing it tells of thee,
Thou restless Nor'land Sea.

I wander unhailed along the streets,
My heart all heavy with thoughts of home;
I watch *this* tide as it beats and beats,
With its sodden fringe of salt, salt foam;
Yet though these waters be grey and sad
They stir the soul of this stranger-lad;
In this mystic waved humanity
I catch the music that beat for me
Across the Nor'land Sea.

As a cradle-croon it set, meseems,
This heart astir with its ancient strife;
It lapped me asleep and led my dreams
In the dim unlaboured dawn of life;
For the laughing boy it kept a tune,
For the dreaming youth an unread rune;
And still its melody follows me,
This old-loved Nor'land Sea.

The Nor'land Sea

In the summer noon it held me slave
 With sun-bright music brave and strong;
In depths of a windy wave-plashed cave
 It touched me a weird unworded song;
When the stars beat up the breezeless lift,
When the moon sent tangled light adrift,
 When the mystic sails passed slow to lee
 Came many a way-lost lilt to me
 From the wide Nor'land Sea.

In the Night Season

Thou art with me, O beloved,
 Thou art with me in the night—
When the dark is at the deepest,
 When sleep gifts the soul with sight—
Thou art with me, O beloved,
 In a dream of old delight.

In a glimpse of still spring weather
 With the sunlight on thy head,
Thou art waiting, O beloved,
 Thou art waiting who was dead,
And our lips go warm together
 As it was when we were wed.

Yea, we greet with fair good-morrow
 All untouched of Earth's surprise,
As we pass into the meadow
 Where the simple sunshine lies;
Yea, no shade of all our sorrow
 Dims the shining of thine eyes.

In the Night Season

Down the path we wander slowly,
Down the path we went of old,
By the river's sunlit shallow
Where it sings o'er lambent gold;
And the place to us is holy
For the love that here was told.

Dear! it seems we have not parted
Where the ways for ever cease;
For the years before us brighten
With a love that shall increase;
Dear! I am not lonely-hearted,
And thy face is fair with peace.

Nay, our hearts have no misgiving
While the sweet dream holds its sway;
But beloved, O beloved!
At the dawning of the day—
I am lone among the living,
Thou art Dream for aye and aye!

To Arms!

Gird thee for warfare, O my soul!
Nor brood on creeds that bruised thy life;
The only salve shall make thee whole,
Is greater daring, direr strife.

Be thou no bondsman to the Past;
Nor yield the tyrant Future sway;
Bring to this warfare what thou hast,
And stand for all thy strength, To-day.

Let old fights go; this day is thine;
Yon sun is for a freeman's need;
Naught but the dawnless Dark is sign
That Earth can do without thy deed.

Cloudland

Fresh is the wind in its blowing,
Over the spring-tide blue;
High are the clouds in their going,
Afret where the winds pursue;
With beauty their only showing;
White as with young content
Gaily they go; without knowing
Whence come or whither sent.

From southward to westward drifted
All of an April day;
Full lightly they swing, uplifted
Over the city's grey;
Tossed free of the wind, and rifted
In gaps of sudden blue;
Caught warm of the sun, and sifted
With clear light through and through.

O'er shadowless deeps of azure,
All as the wise winds blow,
With a seemly grace of leisure,
Cloud after cloud they go;

English Poems

In a dance of sunny pleasure
That keepeth high and clear,
As unto an airy measure,
Too fine for human ear.

I watch them drift and dally,
And shine as they were wet,
With the clear light blown in sally
Of winds that veer and fret:
Till my youth-dreams rise, and rally,
And press me still to seek
Yon Cloudland of slope and valley
Sun-touched on one pure peak!

An Autumn Wooing

Come, let me find thee quiet places
Where flowers blow for a maiden's hair,
Where song with sunlight interlaces
To make a sweetness in the air,
Where naught of shadow shifts upon
The place where once the sun hath shone.

O Love! it is not well to tarry
In dreams of youth when youth has fled;
Here, rough winds have the will to harry
And grey rains wet thy weary head;
Come with me to the land I wot,
So love shall lighten all thy lot.

Nay, nay, it is not well to linger
In foolish dreams of fancy-free;
Fret not that gold upon thy finger
Which long ago I gave to thee;
Say thou wilt set thy love in thrall
Lest wine of freedom turn to gall.

English Poems

Think of the merry lads who plaited
A loop of blooms to bind thy brow,
How each has gone and all have mated;
Their children plait the blossoms now,
While thou and I still tarry here
Upon the brown slope o' the year.

Much have we seen of sunless weather,
Much have we borne of bitter wind,
Since thro' the lanes we laughed together
Where thou wert coy when I was kind;
“Wise maids should live alone,” you said,
“’T is only silly souls who wed.”

Poor wit grown stale; let us be silly;
Sure many fools have gone before;
When life is hard, and ways are hilly,
When wit is less and love is more,
Wise fools are they who learn the art
To share their burdens, heart with heart.

Nay, love; I find it sweet to woo thee,
Though thou hast found me many a fret;
The sunny maidenhood that drew me
Moves under these sad eyelids yet;
While I do find it pleasant still
To search the mazes of thy will.

An Autumn Wooing

But we are late who loved so early;
The sun goes sloping from above;
Yet in the East the lights are pearly
Where I would lead thee, O my Love!
What! still that old, fond, foolish—"No,"
Your heart speaks truer; let us go!

Two Toilers

Behold him pass thro' tranquil fields,
While twilight shadows round him lie;
Though bowed and burdened yet he yields
Grace, to yon gracious sky.

The grace of simple tasks well done,
That regal human grace is his;
Slow steps he home at set of sun,
Nor knows how great he is.

Beside him goes his little lass
Singing, nor deems the day too long:
She is of those wise souls who pass
Straightway from toil to song.

These two, how rich in state they be,
Plodding athwart the crimsoned west:
She sings of happy heart, and he
Finds in her song his rest.

Misunderstood

I stood amid the tombs to-day,
Where marble plinth and pillar rise;
Where Holy Writ gilds sordid clay;
Where vice is tricked in virtue's guise.

And in a sodden place apart
A very human word I found;
The story of a lonely heart,
Set on a long-neglected mound.

A common mound of matted grass;
A sunken cross rough-hewn in wood;
Whereon, amid the lichen, was
The one brief word—MISUNDERSTOOD.

Nor name, nor date was graven there;
One word there was, and only one.
Enough! this nameless soul hath share
With noblest names beneath the sun;

English Poems

For what gives Earth of royal gift
To all her starry sons who try
Through blame and bitterness to lift
Light on man's life—and fail—and die?

Some common mound of matted weed;
Some sunken cross rough-hewn in wood;
Whereon is set—O bitter meed!—
That one brief word—MISUNDERSTOOD.

Betrothal

This tale is old, this tale you have to tell;
Sure many lips have told it; many eyes
Shone to its telling under twilight skies,
Since thro' the splendour of the dusk there fell
The rich far-tinkle of a camel's bell,
Swinging from Mesopotamia; dyes
Deepen adown the west in weary-wise
Since Isaac met Rebecca by the well.

I sing amiss; thy tale dear friend, is young;
Forever young; old it makes all else seem;
Nor dawn, nor spring-tide, nor the poet's dream
Starts with so fresh a grace, as when the tongue
Loosens about its Love; filched of this theme
Earth had no tale her children could have sung.

Marriage

Heart-freedom is found, nor in praise nor in
splendour

When Bridegroom and Bride at the altar are
bound;

But in vows that are true, as in loves that are
tender,

Heart-freedom is found:

As this song of my singing is woven and wound

In a mesh of white rhyme, since haply its sender
Would marry his blessing to virgin-sweet sound—

So love wears her bonds for the grace they shall
lend her

To-day at the altar where two lives are crowned;

For in depths of obedience and heights of
surrender

Heart-freedom is found!

That Far Country

Beyond the plains of But-for-this,
Behind the peaks of But-for-that,
There lies a land, a land of bliss,
Which all men would be at.

There no strife is; the kinsfolk there
Jar not as mortal kinsfolk jar;
Its lovers love with love most fair;
Its friends most steadfast are.

No ill is thought; no lies are sped;
The tempted lets the tempter pass;
No man slinks forth with dismal head,
Shamed by the man he was.

There each has found the good he sought;
There all have wrought the things they
schemed;
Nought that is fondest comes to nought
Of all its folk have dreamed.

Yet none may to this country climb;
Only, at whiles, a man may win
Waft of its charmèd bells a-chime—
The bells of Mighthavbin!

Pax Sine Pace

Pause here: sure here is peace;
Noon, and the drowse of noon;
Waters in slumbrous tune;
Meadows with kine at ease;

Pools where clear waters flow—
Pools where the shining trout
Flicker; while in and out,
Darkling their shadows go.

Smoothly the river slides
Seaward; through tangled grass
Swaying, its waters pass;
Blue at its heart abides.

Blue of the placid sky;
Set in soft grace between
Green banks and shadowed green,
'The great depths of heaven lie.

Pax Sine Pace

Lo! from its silver lair
Hunting the lazy fly,
Gleaming a curve on high
Glances a trout in air:

Lo! from the blossomed thorn
Swiftly on wings a-whirr
Flashes the kingfisher—
Straightway that trout is torn

Peaceful the place, you say?
Fool! it is red with strife;
Ruthless and swift and rife
Slayers come here to slay.

Reveille

The birds are up, the buds are out,
Winds free and clouds afit;
Sure he is but a dullard lout
Who lags abed with lambs about:
God stir his cloddish wit.

Sad stint is his who hath not known
The push of spring-time sap;
Whose life takes not the bird's high tone;
Whose love blows not when buds are blown:
God mend his barren hap!

Afterwards

Ran a child—when skies went clear,
When the rain had spent its might,
When the sun with laggard cheer
Jewelled up the land with light—

Ran a child with shining feet,
Them to dabble in the flood,
Dancing down the village street,
Quick with dead leaves, dark with mud.

When the merry tide had passed,
Little pools of sudden dye
Gathered to their hearts the vast
Vision of the evening sky.

When the child—made still with awe
By this glimpse of azure grace—
Peered into a pool, he saw
Heaven about a little face!

English Poems

Home he went with loitered feet;
Sought a silent place apart;
For to him the night was sweet,
With this wonder in his heart.

Sad! the child with morning trust,
Sought that pool of wondrous dye;
But he found a thin grey dust
Where had shone a piece of sky!

Children of Fortune

I. IN THE COUNTRY

It was a little Child
Who from her cot had crept;
And in the dawn she smiled,
While yet her Mother slept:

Smiled at the curtained chink
To see the wondrous snow;
Her widened eyes a-wink,
Her morning face a-glow.

Breathless she gazed upon
This magic of the night;
Her old black World had gone
And sent this World of white!

The silence as of dream
Was on the windless air;
A peaceful, level gleam
Spread upward everywhere.

English Poems

The withered moon was wan,
 'Mid little clouds the least;
While crimson shimmer ran
 Far up the shining East.

A crow with head awry
 Shuffled across the lawn;
A white tree touched the sky,
 And laced the whiter dawn.

Then back to bed she went,
 And asked for Mother's kiss;
There lapped in warm content
 She shaped a thought like this—

“ The World is someone's child,
 Which from its cot has crept;”
And by this thought beguiled,
 The babe, Good Fortune, slept.

II. IN THE CITY

It was a homeless Child,
 Who from a cellar crept,
With eyes blood-red and wild;
 And the great city slept.

Her knotted hair was damp;
 Raw were her unshod feet

Children of Fortune

Under the yellow lamp,
There in the snow-slushed street.

A sour fog was the sky;
Cold drizzle was the air;
This Child, not asking why,
Crept slowly—anywhere!

Then to her side there came
Ghostlike, from out the dark,
A dog without a name;
Dripping, and lean, and stark.

She took that nameless dog,
And made her lap its bed;
While in the bleak sour fog
This to herself she said—

“The World is No-one’s child,
Which from some cellar crept;”
To this thought reconciled
The waif, Ill-Fortune, slept.

My Autumn Queen

Behold this little Maiden
With all her laughter fled;
Two hands with berries laden,
Red berries on her head;

With weary step that lingers
Tired in the long dusk road;
With droop of little fingers,
Faint with their ruddy load.

Come, Ruthie, let me carry
This wealth your heart desired;
Sure little footsteps tarry
When little feet are tired.

The eventide comes colder,
And we must homeward hold;
So lay upon this shoulder
Your head of ravelled gold.

O Maiden, you have led me
As to a merry tune,

My Autumn Queen

With twinkling feet that fled me
All through the autumn noon:

When yet the air was mellow,
And shadow there was none;
When woods of red and yellow
Flashed in the fiery sun—

Sweet was your fleeing laughter;
In echo still more sweet;
While light leaves fluttered after
The going of your feet.

You danced in rustled places,
Where brown leaves made their lair;
You sped down sun-lit spaces
With loose gold on your hair.

Oh, we were gay together
This sunny Maid and I,
All in the autumn weather
Beneath the autumn sky.

We wrought amid the sedges
Green crown of finest pith;
We sought along the hedges
Red gems to twine therewith.

English Poems

With green and red I bound you
Where sunlight set its sheen;
I kissed, sweet Child, and crowned you,
My shining Autumn Queen—

A Queen with sleep o'rladen,
Whose crown drops from her head—
A weary little Maiden
With all her laughter fled!

The Bather

I

The last frail beauty of the dawn
Has passed from sea and sky.
And now the urgent sun swings high
Thro' morning mist, as thro' white fire;
Along the shore a gracious brightness spreads,
Where small waves, quick with sunlight,
Shuffle in gleeful silver on the sand.
Afar the peaks of Arran loom
Thro' shifting greyness of a mist—
A tattered web of mist—
Whereon gay wisps of rainbow flit and fade.
Pale blue the sky, dark blue the sea,
Their lustrous far horizons smoothly set
Each unto each; and soft the west wind blows
Bringing salt vigour to this morning hour,
Whereof all things are pure.

II

Into this sacred purity comes Man.
Behold him! a drab, unlovely blur,

English Poems

Drifting along the sun-bright strip of sand—
Wet sand that smokes.
Behold him! slack, irresolute, slow,
As from his feet a long black shadow trails.
Still darker are his thoughts;
Shame bows his head; and in his heart
Throbs fierce remorse!
Celt of the Celts, son of the sternest North,
His conscience drives him to the outer deeps
Of grim despair. For has he not,
In body and in soul, herded with swine,
Sinned beyond hope, strayed to the edge of Hell?
No prodigal was he five days ago,
When in the bright green Ring he stood
Elate, unconquered; chief of the wrestlers;
First with the swinging hammer;
And with the tossing caber first.
Ah! then the roaring Burg, time after time,
Acclaimed his mighty strength
With cheers that rocked his world!
And now, behold him! downcast, grim;
His strength a curse; by devils mocked;
An outcast from his God!

III

He stands at gaze beside the gentle wave
That spreads its net of silvery lace
Sibilant upon the sand. Long time he stands,

The Bather

While memories of a Northern shore
Stir through his gloom; for there he bathed,
A boy with laughing boys; in sun and wind
Racing and chasing all a summer noon
With naked freedom. And why not now? . . .
Swift as the thought he strips with savage jerks
The dingy vestments of enthralled Man,
Until that husk lies huddled at his feet.
Lo! now he stands a-glitter in the sun
Fair as an ivory god of ancient Greece!
Free! he flings his great arms forth
Uttering a shout, while rosy shadows flit
Across his shining breast.
Now moves he to the water with slow step
Delicately; on the wet sand his image gleams
As in a mirror, as there he stands
Radiant against the greyness of the tide;
Now he wades outward, till the lines
Of his firm beauty waver and grow dim.
Free! with mighty stroke on stroke,
Sunlight on gleaming arm and red-gold hair,
Exultingly he pushes out to sea!

IV

Still seaward far; until his tossing head
Stirs as a small dark speck upon the tide.
But see! he turns; with slower stroke,
His shoulder lifting clear, his glowing face

English Poems

In ruddy wetness takes the cloudless sun.
Nearer the shore he draws, until at last
The water yields him up; hard-breathed
But still unspent; crimson from head to heel;
His mind released, his spirit cleansed!
Where now the shame, where now the black
remorse?

Where the grim haunting of his Northern creed?
Gone; braced, assoiled, triumphantly he speeds
Shouting along the shore; his hair tossed back;
In stark, primeval joyousness he speeds;
The spirit of him bright, enfranchised, gay!
There by the tide he lingers,
Casting the skimming pebble; humming a Gaelic
song;

A boy once more, a laughing boy,
He fronts the spacious freedom of the hour!

The Sphinx in Rotten Row

That world has gone; that little world
Whose blazoned folly blows unfurled
Daily at four; the dazzled Row
Lies dim; the jewelled, jingling show
Has shone its idle hour, and fares
Elsewhither with its perfumed cares!
But who is this perched on the fence
Who counts and clicks the greasy pence
From hand to hand; his crimson vest
Made wondrous by the crimsoned West?
All hail! thou peaceful organ-man,
Peace be with thee and all thy clan!
I know that feathered hat, those rings;
Thy shuffled gait not seldom brings
To me, alas! those worst of boons,
Thy Tuscan smile, thy tawdry tunes!
But who is this perched on the pole,
This blinking, meditative Soul?
All hail! thou kinsman of the other,
His cousin, or at best, his brother—
Albeit he binds thee in a chain,

English Poems

A hireling monkey for his gain!
Red is thy bonnet, and with red
Most bravely thou art jacketed;
Thine eyes are twitched in shine and shut,
While in thy cheek a cherished nut
Takes from the contour of thy face
Its haughty pre-historic grace!
Grim prophecy of god-like man,
Sage when the elder world began,
What thoughts hast thou upon thy perch
With *men* beneath the nimble search
Of thy quick eyes? O sad-faced fop,
Gay tumbler on this organ-top,
Seems all our mighty race to thee
Some foolishhest fraternity
Of jigging apes; apes sent a-skip
To stale old tunes; our Earth a strip
Of grass-green baize whereon we strut
And dance (like thee) for some poor nut?
Mean exile! clowning it for alms—
Thy Heaven a land of sunlit palms—
Seems it to thee in this still Hour
That Man is slave to some dark Power
Who binds a thong about his middle;
Who grinds him music for a riddle,
Whereto he struts, with skip and hop,
Unwitting when the Tune shall stop?
O, blinking, meditative Soul,

The Sphinx in Rotten Row

Perched there upon the organ-pole,
With such deep questions dost thou task
Thy wit, behind that antique mask?
Nay, blink not; for thy simple blink
Prompts swift suspicion that thy wink
Is cynical; thy face were meek
Did not that nut clapt in thy cheek
Give to thy grin a vulgar guile
Unknown to pre-adamic smile!
Come, sly-faced Sphinx! Let loose thy wit
And add thy gloss to what was writ
By Hebrew scribes; for thou must know
The genesis of Long Ago—
The stark uprising of The Race
Who jingle here in joyless grace.
To find the time, the clime, the clan
Where Monkey slept and woke up Man,
Is our vain search; our wise are vext,
Our witlings mock the parson's text.
Out with thy tale, nor spare our pride,
Let wag thy wit whate'er betide:—
Whose was the mighty mind that rose
And snatched sublimity from clothes?
What dapper Monkey swift upgat
To gird his loins, to brush his hat,
That he, the first, might strut the glades
To dazzle anthropoidal maids?
O grey-faced Sphinx, let loose thy wit,

English Poems

That so our braggart Race may sit
Beneath thy pole, and learn from thee
The world's primeval vanity!

.

Aha! thy face begins to wrinkle,
And stir, as to some inward twinkle
Of age-old jest; thine eyes slow shut,
Thy face atwist—*crack goes the nut*.
Od's life! the imp with chuckled glee
Tosses the empty shell at me!

From Diogenes : Greeting

(1880-1890)

Poets, this chaunt for you!

Great was your art to set men's hearts aglow
With visioned promise of what men might know
Of fair, wise, true; to rouse races to march
That else were chained; to fling a fearless arch
Of friendly song from land to land; to light
The great blind centuries thro' utmost night
With hill-top chaunts of dawn. Thrice great your
art

When fierce-tongued singers of the tender-heart
Made harps of prison-bars; when leapt their notes
Like sudden steel athwart all tyrant throats;
When song smacked of Mount Sinai—such the
power

These ancients had. How is it at this hour?
Long have I looked, O dainty Poets, yea,
Loud have I prayed (as in this tub I may)
That some uncouth, wild, prophet-voice would rise
Chaunting an iron song; a bard mad-wise,

English Poems

Whose cry would shrill across your jingling sweet
Trills, like cannon-music to victorious feet
Trampling where nautch-girls danced; a radiant
bard

Whose songs were light though heaven were all
unstarred!

Yet comes he not! Come still your motley throng
Thrumming on banjos; ballade, sonnet, song
Spin to the crowd agape, as jugglers spin
Their gilded balls; your praise the public grin!
Are all the tyrants dead? are all men free
That Poesy goes jigging thus? Has She
Whose glory made the mighty Masters blench
Become, to-day, each strolling mummer's wench,
Dancing to lightest tunes? Answer me true.

Poets, I chaunt for you!

The Moorland Farm

I

Here, on the sounding hill-top,
Sheltered in lee of this huddled wood,
I listen to the loud chaunt of the wind,
A joyous wind of April.
It sweeps up the hillside,
Youthful, clamorous; gay of heart,
Quick for adventure, it swings
Thro' the wood and thro' the wood,
Where the pine trees throb sonorous glee,
Riotous as waves on a pebbled shore;
Thro' the wood and thro' the wood
Drives this questing wind until it leaps,
Shouting, forth to the sombre moor.
A far-spread moor, circled with grey hills;
Its heather black with winter frost,
Its quagmires bleak with winter rain,
Dull welcome it gives to this blustering wind.

English Poems

II

But now, behold the Life-Bringer!
The piled clouds dispart; the sun leaps forth;
Its conquering gleam sweeps up the hill,
Brightens the pillared gloom of the wood,
Spreads across the moor in passionate gusts,
Faster than eye can travel.
And lo! the moorland lightens; it lives;
Its heather kindles, rejoicing, to a ruddy flush;
Its moss-hags glisten to a plangent green,
In the path of the rushing sunlight!

III

And see! yon moorland farm no longer stands
Grim in the midst of grimness; its grey walls,
Its blue roof, its tossing plume of smoke,
Take beauty from the quick benignant sun.
There, in the little fields, the conquered fields,
Won from the moorland thro' long patient years,
The ancient drama of man's lot is set
In a vast loneliness. Behold! the sower
Goes forth to sow; yonder he strides
The brown furrows; shuttling to right and left
Quick handfuls of white grain—
Two cloudlets caught in glowing light,—

The Moorland Farm

While close behind scuffle the glittering crows.
Ah there! in its beauty, lives the age-long toil
Of man with this stubborn land,
His heritage, his home.

SCOTTISH POEMS

Burns from Heaven

(Centenary: 1796-1896)

Wha says that Robbie Burns is deid?
Wha says he lies below the weed,
A pickle stoor, baith heart and heid
 This hunner year?
Deil blast the loons! but they hae lee'd,
 For Robin's here!

Here whare the Cluden, 'neath the müne;
Gangs happin' to the same auld tüne,
Whare hoolets to the midnight win'
 Mak' eerie mane;
Here whare I focht wi' sangs and sin
 Through days lang gane.

For Heaven is guid, but Scotland's best!
Sae when they gie the herps a rest
I tak' a frien'ly, quiet request
 To Peter Doot;

Scottish Poems

And he, guid man, swears at the hest—
But lets me oot!

Behint me clinks the gowden yett;
And faith! the psalms I sune forget
As doon the road I skelp, sherp-set,
Past star and planet,
Wi' thochts o' hame that bizz red-het
Aneath my bannet!

And when I stap oot ower the cluds—
There 's Scotland still! The birling fluds;
The broomy braes; the whusslin' wuds;
Gowans the same!
God! but my heart starts off in thuds
To ken I 'm hame!

Saftly I daunder up and doon,
By Ayr and Nith, by Embro' toon,
A licht-fit, liltin', hame-daft loon!
Ilk stream, ilk tree,
The mavis' sang, the cushie's croon
Brings joy to me!

Yet Scotland 's changed since first I kent it;
The gospel-faulds hae been augmentit;
The hypocrites hae a' repentit,
And quat their quirks;
The auld black creeds hae been white-pentit
In a' the kirks!

Burns from Heaven

Nae mair frae poopits yerks a yell
O' God's damnation fierce and fell;
A saft and couthie tale they tell,
 And tell it quick;
They've sell't the guid auld brunstane Hell,
 And pensioned Nick!

Nae lad plays pliskie wi' a lass;
Nae fule tak's hame a stotterin' glass;
Nae stirk gangs furth a college-ass—
 Baalam's the mate o't;
The Lord kens hoo it comes to pass,
 But that 's the gate o't!

And as for Bards—they're scarce as brose;
But kailyaird gents, stript to the hose,
Keep dibble-dibblin' at the prose
 For English stots;
And Lun'on toon pays through the nose
 In gowden groats!

Guid faith! I kenna wha can fash
To read sic screed o' auld wives' clash;
The teary-weary, cantin' hash
 Is nocht but haivers;
And yet the birkies, prood and gash,
 Brag o' their clavers!

Scottish Poems

Leeze me! on tales o' deils and drink;
On canty sangs that jouk and jink
Wi' rowth o' luve, wi' rowth o' clink!

But bards and bottle
Ballant and sang hae ta'en a kink
O' d—d teetotal!

As for mysel' I 'm saunt or hog
In this man's praise, or that man's prog;
My very statues glower incog.,
For jaw and nose is
As like this common, rough phizog
As I 'm like Moses!

The critic-craws still bigg their hame
'Mong Robin's fauts, on Robin's fame;
Ilk rag-tag rhyme that bears his name
Is brocht their beak in,
And a' his bits o' sin and shame
Gang to the theekin'!

Deil roast the craws that mak' sic cawin';
Their blame is stale, their praise is stawin';
When Robin drank he paid the lawin',
Sure that 's weel kenned;
When Robin fell he mourned his faain'—
So there 's an end!

Burns from Heaven

Faith! if the truth maun be confest,
Auld Scotland's guid, but Heaven is best;
A body's friens there stand the test
 Withouten sham;
Guid fellows a' at crack the jest,
 And pass the dram!

Shakespeare, the king of a' the core;
Byron, a deil to start a splore;
Shelley, wha's gowden liltis galore
 Keeps a' herps waitin';
Coleridge, whiles seraph, whiles a bore,
 Like Milton's Laitin!

But Scott's the wale o' men for me,
Wi' pawky Allan at his knee;
And gleg James Hogg, wha throws a wee
 At burly Kit;
And Louis—blythe of late cam' he—
 A' shanks and wit.

Wi' siclike friens Scots saunts come sair,
Sae back to Scotland I'll nae mair;
For after Heaven I canna bear
 Sic godly folk;
Then fareweel! daylight's in the air—
 And there's the cock!

Provost o' Kilboggie

Wha doesna ken Kilboggie,
That trig, auld, steerin' toon?
There 's no' a toon the mak' o't,
Search Scotland up and doon;
It breeds big men, Kilboggie;
There 's me—and Provost Broon!

Dinna ye ken the Provost?
Losh, man, but that 's your loss;
There 's few to match oor Provost,
Sae canny he, and closs;
A fell hard nut is Peter
And faith! but he 's no' boss!

A pawky cheild the Provost,
And no' to say ower shy
In bragging up Kilboggie,
Its climate and its kye,
Its lasses and its gowf-links—
Wi' muckle else forbye.

Provost o' Kilboggie

He drives a thrawart Council
The gate he wants to gang;
He tells the Auld-kirk Session
What 's richt and wha is wrang;
And if they argy-bargy—
Gosh! but he keeps them thrang!

Ilk year he gangs to Lun'on
The toon's affairs to redd;
He kens the law-folks brawly,
And beats them at their tred;
They canna jink the Provost—
For he 's Kilboggie bred!

And when it comes to politics,
Wi' cronies ower a dram
Ye 'll hear the truth frae Peter;
Their shuffle and their sham,
And a' their glibbest promises—
No' worth a tinkler's damn!

He 's pridefu', whiles, the Provost,
But no' to say ower prood;
He blaws his ain bit trumpet,
But no' to say ower lood;
A godly man, in reason,
But no' a goody-good!

Scottish Poems

A hearty lad is Peter,
And nae close-fisted loon;
A model to the County,
A credit to the toon;
Then, here 's to auld Kilboggie,
And here 's to Provost Broon!

The Funeral of Thomas Carlyle

(Ecclefechan, 10th February, 1881)

Tolls the slow bell beneath the dowie sky,
Trails the black hearse beneath the dreary light;
They bring him dead, who shall not surely die,
They bring him hame when all the land is white,
Here where the poor folk wait
Silent, beside the gate.

This narrow gateway in the kirkyaird wall;
These humble village folk to bow the head;
The land made bleak with snow; and over all
The low grey clouds—thus bring they hame the
dead.

Drear as it thus befell,
He would have deemed it well!

Stand hushed, ye kindly folk, and let him pass;
Long hath he toiled who comes to take his peace.
This man was great; yet petty men, alas!
Shall scorn his gifts, soon as these tollings cease.
Yet shall he safely in,
To join his silent kin.

Scottish Poems

Tolls the slow bell beneath the sombre sky;
Trails the black hearse across the wintry white;
They bring him dead, who cannot surely die,
They bring him hame out of the long grim
fight—
Here where his ain folk wait
Hushed, at the kirkyaird gate.

Cronies

Here at the Winter fire we sit,
Cronies, and unco snug;
A clear fireside, a lamp new lit,
And we twa on the rug;
Cronies in honest freendship knit—
An auld man and his doug!

Yet no' sae auld, and no' sae stiff,
Nor yet without the will
To speil the brae, and get a gliff
O' heather on the hill;
The caller air is guid to sniff—
Guid baith for me and Bill!

His glossy coat, sae trig and ticht,
Is of the chestnut hue;
His nose is keen, and keen his sicht
When rabbits loup in view;
His pedigree may no' be richt—
But lord! his heart is true!

Scottish Poems

And fine he kens whare rabbits rin,
As brisk he taks the road;
First up the brae, he waits abin,
For whistle or for nod,
To start his rampauge 'mang the whin—
Since I 'm his human god!

Gosh! but he kens the richt and wrang
As weel as you or me;
He kens the gate he ocht to gang,
But whiles he gangs ajee—
Then tail, and lugs, and head doon hang
While guilt coors in his e'e!

He crawls the earth wi' humble air,
He pleads to be forgiven;
And what can man or doug do mair
Wha's conscience is hard-driven—
But ae kind word makes Bill aware
That kind words are his heaven!

Oh! trusty soul; Oh! simple creed;
Kindness that casts out fear
Is still this auld earth's sairest need
To bring millenium near;
Sae Bill and me are fast agreed
That it 's no' far frae here:

Cronies

For there he sprawls upon the rug
Afore the Winter fire;
While here sit I, content and snug
As ony in the shire;
A couthie hame, a faithful doug—
What mair can man desire!

The Vote Cadger

Ken ye? guid faith, I ken ye fine;
Your faither's build in ilka line,
Your mither's face by ilka sign—
 You 're Aundra Black!
Losh! sit ye doon, for auld lang syne,
 And gie 's your crack!

A decent man your faither was;
Hearty, but no' a haiverin' ass;
Whiles took a dram—but let that pass;
 He wasna gyte
Wha mairried sic a mensefu' lass
 As Marget White!

'Till they gaed South I kent them weel.
And you 're their son? The sturdy deil
Wha crawd, and kicked a wee red heel
 In Marget's lap?
Heth! but ye 've growed a buirdly cheil,
 A swanky chap!

The Vote Cadger

And what 's your trade, if I micht speer?
That grand gold chain, and a' your gear
Look unco braw—and duds sae dear;
The deil belicket,
Whate'er your trade, man, it 's fell clear
Ye havena sticket!

What 's that ye say? Gosh, you 're no' blate!
A Hoose o' Commons candidate?
And ye, frae Lun'on, a' the gate,
Hae hirsled doon
To birl the bawbee o' your Fate
In oor auld toon?

Your mither said ye wad gang faur,
Ye were a bairn sae ill to scaur;
And as a laddie nane wad daur
To thole your knuckle;
Ye 've done no' bad; some folks do waur—
But no' that muckle!

For politics, when a' is said,
Is no' the bonniest kind o' trade;
A truthfu' man has truth mislaid
Gaun doon that road,
Whare mony a godly man has strayed
Faur frae his God.

Scottish Poems

My vote? Ye 've come to cadge my vote
In Labour's Cause? Man, tak' ye note
That I 'm no' ane that cares a groat
For cadgers' fables;
Nor am I ane wad turn my coat
To match new labels!

Your faither was a working-man
When work was work; but noo the plan
Is jist to daidle a' ye can,
And watch the clock;
But when the hooter blows—it 's *than*
There 's steerin' folk!

Nae doot we 've some braw workers still
Wi' brain and hand, wi' heart and will;
Nae doot o' work they get their fill,
Mair than their rashion;
But honest work, and keenest skill?—
Clean oot o' fashion!

Work-folk hae tint their auld endeavours;
Ower mony loons noo seek their favours,
Glib lads wha fill their heads wi' haivers,
No' for their guid;
Deil tak' sic rantin' red-hot ravers
For his ain grid!

The Vote Cadger

A horny hand, a grimy face,
They tell work-folk, are signs o' grace,
Signs o' the grand new Coming Race,
 Wi' nane their like;
And faith, if ye misdoot their case,
 They 'll call a strike!

They strike for this, they strike for that,
They strike—and dinna ken for what;
When ony daft excuse comes pat—
 Doon gang the tools;
Wi' nae mair thocht than my auld hat
 For sense, or rules!

But let that bide; my freend, you 're young,
And mebbe my camstrurie tongue
Sounds like the crackit bell that 's hung
 In oor kirk steeple;
Its call to grace is mocked among
 A deaf-dour people!

Still, this I 'll say: If Labour's Cause
Mak's for dispeace, breeds bitter thraws,
Gies tyrants new the auld rough taws
 For their ain profit—
Then may it gang, wi' a' its laws,
 Doon to black Tophet!

Scottish Poems

No' that I wad your Cause misjudge,
For I mysel' hae been a drudge,
Earning sma' pay wi' muckle grudge
Baith late and early;
But when wild rogues cry up their fudge
It rasps me sairly!

To rug and rive, sure it 's weel kenned,
Will naething mak' and naething mend;
The mair ye fecht, the less ye fend;
Wise men and leal
Seek mair and mair that common end—
The Common Weal!

Maisters and men maun draw thegither,
Forget their pride, forego their swither,
Deal fair and square wi' ane anither
In work and wage;
Each man for each, and each a brither
For this New Age.

As for my vote, that stands its lane;
Whare it will gang I tell to nane;
But still and on, I 'm no' the ane
To vote at random;
So Aundra, lad, that maitter's taen
To avizandum!

Peace in Glenallen

Oh! Guid bethankit for this Sabbath-day,
 This bonnie Sabbath-day;
When I was young the wale o' months was May,
 And May is heartsome noo that I am auld;
Bethankit for the heigh blue sky abin,
The gowans white, the yellow o' the whin;
Bethankit for yon laverock's cheerfu' tune,
 And a' the green braes round me, fauld on fauld.

The Auld-Kirk bell has stopped! I like it best,
 Atweel I like it best,
When its wee tow-rowed clapper tak's a rest,
 And a' the glen, aince mair, is still, is still;
Then I can hear the ewes' far-cairried cry
And think my ain bit thochts; mind wi' a sigh
Yon merry days lang syne: and smile forbye
 Watching twa jinking lammies on the hill.

Here at the lown hoose-end I sit my lane,
 Lanesome I sit my lane;
Dreaming, as in a dwam, o' all that 's gane
 Since I was daft as ony lamb mysel';
Running aboot the braes frae morn to nicht,
When ilka hour o' ilka day was bricht;

Scottish Poems

Ah! then my heart, my lassie's heart, was licht—
Unkent was care, unkent the Passing Bell!

By why should I compleen? I've had my share,
Guid kens I've had my share
Of canty days, and nichts withoot a care.

The Lord's my shepherd! gifts He sent to me—
A blythe fireside, a gudeman o' the best,
And sax braw bairns! Hard work wi' little rest
Has been my lot; but yet I maun confess 't—
The end o' hairst aye brocht my penny-fee!

Nae mair the kirk for me; I'm far ower frail,
Surse me! but I am frail!
I've kent the day when I wad kilt my tail
And tak' the lang road ower the hill, to hear
The true Word preached. But noo the Kirkton Fast,
And a' the grand auld preachers—passed, a' passed!
Neist time I cross yon hill will be my last;
Cheerfu' I'll gang, in faith, withoot a fear!

Sair, sair I grat, but noo I canna greet,
I'm far ower auld to greet,
For my gudeman that's gane; the saut tears weet
Nae mair, cheeks that were like the simmer rose,
But noo are thin and grey; a' things maun cease;
And yon hot tears that brocht the heart release
Are mine nae mair; God faulds me in His peace;
This bonnie day I tak' what He bestows!

The Beadle's Lament

Nae mair, auld Sabbath Book, nae mair
Shall we twa tak' the poopit stair;
Aneath my arm wi' decent care
 Ye 've traivelled lang;
But noo, like bauchles past repair,
 We twa maun gang.

For yon sleek Herd, wi' face o' whey,
Wha cam' last Spring frae yont Glenspey,
Has set his will, has wrocht his wey
 Wi' laird and cottar;
Till e'en the Session are as cley,
 And he the potter!

He 's turned the auld kirk upside-doon;
Pentit the wa's blue, green, and broon;
The book-brod, tossed roun' and roun',
 Glowers wi' red plush on't;
And in the pews ilk glaiket loon
 Cocks whare he 's cushioned!

Scottish Poems

The douce precentor, Dauvit Parks,
Nae mair in his bit boxie barks;
An organ, stuffed wi' water-warks,
 Mak's a' lugs dirl;
And twa-three lads, in lang white sarks,
 Start aff the skirl!

A braw new Bible has been bocht—
Revised, to clink wi' Modern Thocht;
A braw new beadle has been socht,
 Soople and snod;
And this new Herd, himsel' has wrocht
 A braw new God!

A God wha wadna fricht the craws;
A God wha never lifts the taws;
Wha never heard o' Moses' laws,
 On stane or paper;
A kind o' thowless Great First Cause,
 Skinklin' thro' vapour.

As for the Bible, if you please,
He thinks it 's true—in twa degrees;
Some pairt is chalk, some pairt is cheese;
 But he 'll engage
To riddle oot the biggest lees
 Frae ilka page!

The Beadle's Lament

The Fall, he thinks, is nocht but fable;
Adam ne'er delved, nor killed was Abel;
Men never built the Tower o' Babel;
Nor lenched an Ark;
While auld Methuselah's birthday table
Clean jumps the mark!

No' that he says sic things straught oot;
Lord! he 's as sly 's Loch Leven troot;
But here wi' Science, there wi' Doot
He crams his sermons;
Thrawin' the plainest text about
To match the Germans.

The auld blue Hell he thinks a haiver,
The auld black Deil a kintry claiver,
And what is Sin but saut to savour
Mankind's wersh luggies?
While Saunts, if ye'd believe the shaver,
Are kirk-gaun puggies!

The Lord hae mercy on sic teachin',
And on the kirk that tholes sic speech in;
A heathen-man, wi' heathen screechin'
Were less to blame;
Satan himsel' would damn sic preachin'
For very shame!

Scottish Poems

Oh! for the days when sinners shook
Aneath the true Herd's righteous crook;
When men were telt that this auld Book
 Is God's ain word;
When texts were stanes waled frae the brook,
 And prayer a Sword!

Fower ministers I 've seen ta'en ower
To yon kirkyaird; and a' the fower
Were men o' prayer, were men o' power,
 In Kirk and Session;
Preachers wha nailed ye wi' a glower
 To your transgression!

Oh! for sic men o' godly zeal;
Men wha could grab ye, head and heel,
And slype ye to the Muckle Deil
 Without a qualm;
The sinner thro' the reek micht squeal—
 They sang a psalm!

Stout Herds were they, and steeve their creed;
But this Chiel drones a wee bit screed,
In which God's will, and what Christ dreed,
 Are things to guess on;
Yammers for our Eternal need
 A bairn's schule lesson!

The Beadle's Lament

A wee schule lesson, dull and dowff,
Scribbled atween twa games o' gowff;
For at the tee he mak's his howff
 Baith syne and süne—
But wha cares for a beadle's bowff
 Wha's day is düne.

My day is düne; and richt or wrang
The thocht comes like a waefu' sang;
This Book and me, we 've traivelled lang
 The poopit stair;
But that 's a gate we twa shall gang
 Nae mair, nae mair!

Courting the Kitty

Let shilpit bards sing as they list
O' loves forlorn and lives atwist,
It 's me that kens what they hae missed
 In ilk wersh ditty—
They havena wooed, they havena kissed
 The bonnie Kitty!

Kitty, that licht and lively quean,
Wha links athort the bowling-green;
As coy a lass as e'er was seen,
 Or bard has sung;
Courtied by lads at summer e'en—
 Baith auld and young!

And I, fair Kitty's patient slave,
Hae courted, lightsome, wi' the lave;
No' muckle skill; but to the brave
 Come orra favours;
And siclike oddments still I crave
 Wi' keen endeavours.

Courting the Kitty

To get my bowl weel gressed and paced,
To cheer it hame wi' anxious haste,
To see the nearest bowl ootfaced,
And mine the shot—

Lord! that 's a triumph to my taste,
And piping hot!

For that 's the nicht, the heartsome nicht,
When a' my skill is at its hicht,
When naething 's wrang, when a' thing 's richt,
Fortune weel fettled;
When bowls rin straught, a bonnie sicht,
To whare I ettled!

Gosh! but I 'm prood and unco vain!
For yon 's the nicht when Kitty 's fain
To gar ye think she 's a' your ain
Beyond a jink;
Yoursel' a bowler matched by nane
In ony rink!

But she 's a jilt, a heartless jade,
Wha mak's a gowk o' mony a lad;
She gars him sing, disgraced and sad,
Anither sang,
When bowls rin wide, when pace is bad,
When a' gangs wrang!

Scottish Poems

For Kitty ne'er becomes your wife,
Keen though ye court in peacefu' strife;
Nor are her favours unco rife

 Though sweet her glances;
Since bowling-greens, like mortal life,
 Hae checks and chances!

Yet still and on, play up your best,
Let ilka bowl, smooth-paced and gressed,
Gang frae your hand the happy test

 O' all your skill;
And let rink-fortune, for the rest,
 Bring what it will!

The Gean-tree

Four black walls,
Where the green bank slopes to the river;
In the glen where the peesweep calls and calls—
Four roofless walls
And a fireside cold forever!

A lone gean-tree,
Where the gairden-dyke lies broken;
God! how it gives my childhood back to me,
This bare gean-tree
In its gairden of nettles and docken!

Oh! wintry glen,
With the wind through the heather sighing;
Spate in the river, and snaw on the Ben;
Oh! sombre glen
And your haunting voice a peesweep crying!

A Scots Dominie

1802-1882

White clouds are lilting like a sang
Athort the lift; their shedows gang
Jinking amang the hills, where lang
 The snawdrifts lay;
For sun and wind are thick and thrang
 This April day!

Blythe birls the laverock up the blue;
Gropes the green bud where cranreuch grew;
Dreich was the darg that Winter knew;
 But here comes Spring
To set the tune, to start anew
 God's jing-go-ring!

Faith but my heels keep dirling sair
To dance, as noo I 'll dance nae mair;
Fain would I speil yon hillsides where
 The peesweeps call—
An auld man in a gairden chair
 Row'd in a shawl!

A Scots Dominie

An auld man; but when ploys are set,
And Spring comes whistling at the yett,
A laddie still; fain to forget
 My age, my ills;
Fain to gang linking withoot let
 Ower Ochil hills!

For Ochil glens lie lown and green,
For Ochil burns rin saft and sheen;
Though sma' the troot, though sour the gean,
 Though daft the ploys,
The auld hills call with voices keen
 Wakening auld joys.

Scholar and Maister, soon and late,
In Simmer drouth, in Winter spate,
The grey hills saw me tak' the gate
 With rod and line;
A likely day wi' flee or bait—
 That day was mine!

When lang the road, when dark the nicht,
When snell the wind at morning licht,
It 's me was then the dowie wicht
 Dour hills amang;
Till Devon glinted clear in sicht—
 Then the warld sang!

Scottish Poems

For ower Bencleuch, in crimson lowe,
The sun upsprang; on hicht and howe
I saw the Lord's ain morning grow
 Fair, fair atweel;
But best to me the burnie's rowe
 And the birled reel!

Oh! bygane joy! Oh, present dool!
Noo Maisters daurna play the fool
And laddies daurna plunk the school,
 As aince they daured;
The School Brod, and the School Brod rule,
 Hae them weel scaured!

Through standards, as 'tween granite stanes,
They birl the puir bit shilpit weans;
The Maister, like a slave in chains,
 Now plays the miller;
Grinding the grants frae hearts and brains
 In blood-red siller!

And he is praised wha quickest crams,
Wha's clesses are the biggest shams,
Wha's dunces nae Inspector damns;
 But he an ass is
Wha scorns to fyke wi' quirk exams.,
 Or fish for passes!

A Scots Dominie

Lord! Lord! that I should live to learn
That schools, like grocers' shops, maun earn
Profit, in cash, for ilk bit bairn;

A beggar's dole,
For which, bethankit, never airn
Entered my soul!

Nae School Brod member gowled at me
As though I were a mouse, and he
Almighty God; for such men be—

I've heard them yammer;
Grocers in soul, their tongues are free
Of grace or grammar!

Nae Brod for me; yon lads o' mine
(It's ten lang weary years since syne)
Were no' the kind o' lads to shine

At pass or grant;
But faith! I teach'd them, line on line,
All that they want:

The Carritch, and the auld best Book;
Writing; and how to busk a hook;
The names o' flowers; the way to dook;
The airt of reading;
Laitin; and where the canny nook
When fish were feeding!

Scottish Poems

My laddies focht: I liked a fecht
When all was equal, hicht and wecht;
Aye! mony a twa that banged and peched
 And then shook hands,
Learned a stout trick that keeps them strecht
 In far, far lands.

Sic laddies send me scrape o' the pen
And queer nick-nackets, noo and then;
Good lads! They 're keen to let me ken,
 Amang the rest o 't,
'That I 'm the man that made them MEN
 And that 's the best o 't!

Aye! that 's the thocht to mak' the tune
Yon laverock sings a heartsome boon,
As here I sit, an auld grey loon
 Row'd in a shawl;
Waiting till all earth's sangs sink doon—
 Waiting His call!

Saunders MacSiccar

Ae muneless nicht, in a blear October,
Auld Saunders MacSiccar gaed dodderin' hame;
He wasna near fou, nor he wasna richt sober,
Though I sair misdoot if he kent his name;
When there at the cross-roads, staked and tethered,
Glowered a black goat! or was it a deevil?
“ Preserve us,” quo' Saunders, “ since noo we 've
forgethered,
A sinfu' auld man had better be ceevil!”
“ You 're richt,” quo' the Goat.

Guid guide us! thocht Saunders, sure this is no'
canny,
It 's as true as I 'm sober I heard the baste speak;
A clever wee deil could change hides wi' a nanny,
And still mak' its hame in the Brunstane Reek;
But nathless it 's tied wi' a gey stout tether,
Sae I 'll speak it fair, for this coves the cuddy—
“ Braw nicht”, quo' Saunders, “ and no' bad weather
For deils, or goats, or a daunderin' buddy!”
“ Braw nicht,” quo' the Goat.

Scottish Poems

Weel, that's fair and friendly, thocht Saunders
MacSiccar,

And it's plain as his beardie I've naething to
fear;

Though I'm no' gaun to argy, and it's ower dark
to bicker,

There's twa-three bit questions I'd like fine to
speer!

I'm a Scotsman mysel', I was born doon at
Fintry,

And this deil has the Scots twang, whaever has
bred 'um—

“Do you no' think,” quo' Saunders, “oor grand
auld Kintry

Has drapp'd a gey hantle o' its dour smeddum?”

“You're richt,” quo' the Goat.

“I kent I was richt, man; and this is the way o't—
The flyte and the fecht are noo clean oot o'
fashion;

Ye daurna noo thraw for the yea or the nay o't,

But pouch your opeenions row'd up like a rashion;

It's no' your ain tüne, but what ither folk whistle

That noo ye maun dance till, or else ye'll repent
it!

Am I no' richt in saying the prood Scottish thistle

Is no' jist as jaggie as what we hae kent it?”

“You're richt,” quo' the Goat.

Saunders MacSiccar

“The kirks noo,” quo’ Saunders, “hae tint a’ their
flyting,

Since I was a laddie and crooned ower the
Carritch;

Oh! the brisk collyshangie! Oh, the barking and
biting—

Lord! yon was the spurkle steered saut in oor
parritch!

But noo things are wersh—ilka poopit’s bow-
wowless,

While the Carritch, guid help us, grows shorter
and shorter;

It’s a dowie auld Scotland, forjeskit and thowless,
Noo the kirks are mixed throwther and brayed in
a mortar!”

“You’re richt,” quo’ the Goat.

“And whare is the freedom that made Scotland
prooder

Than ony prood kintry frae here to the Indies—
The freedom oor faithers won, shooder to shooder,
When Scotland was Scotland, and shindies were
shindies?

Nae drams for the drouthy, nae honest free drinking;
Laws here and rules there, wi’ teetotalers to hinder;
But, between oor twa sels, am I no’ richt in thinking
We’re no’ jist the folk to gang dry as a cinder?”

“You’re richt,” quo’ the Goat.

Scottish Poems

“ Fine I kent I was richt; I ’ve a wonderfu’ noddle;

I can see through a whinstane as far as anither;

And if ye ’re the deil, Gosh! I carena a boddle

For we ’re ’greed on a’ hands, as brither wi’
brither.

But I maun get hame, sae I bid ye guid nicht noo;

This road is gey dark, yet I ken a’ the links o’ t;

It ’s jist like the world; and am I no’ richt noo?—

The deil and a Scotsman, they ken a’ the kinks
o’ t!”

“ You ’re richt,” quo’ the Goat.

An Auld Skip

When snaw lies on Demyit,
And black ice fills the loch,
Dour winter I 'll defy it
While I can bend a hough;
Though my auld banes
Start aches and pains,
I 'll tak' twa stanes
And aff I 'll jink
To join the rink—

When snaw lies 'on Demyit
And black ice fills the loch.

When granite-stanes slip snoring
Alang the soopit ice,
And a' the lads are roaring
As gif they werena wice;
In a' the birl,
The steer, the skirl,
My heart plays dirl
To ken I 've still
The auld sure skill—

Scottish Poems

When granite-stanes slip snoring
Alang the soopit ice.

When my last stane gangs linking
True as a cast can be,
And through the lave drives clinking
To settle on the tee,
Lord! I can tell
Frae yon wild yell
That I 've done well;
Doot there is nane
The game 's oor ain—
When my last stane drives clinking
To settle on the tee!

When nicht draws ower Demyit
And darkness ends the game,
Guid faith! I 'll no' deny it
I 'm thankfu' to creep hame;
A heartsome hald
When nichts are cauld
And folk get auld
Is aye the best
For peace and rest—
When nicht draws ower Demyit,
And darkness ends the game!

The Unwelcome Bairn

Meg was his mither, Meg MacNab;
A laughin', daffin', glaikit lass;
Wha was his faither is a wab
Was ne'er unraivelled. Let it pass!

A braw, but maist unwelcome bairn;
Meg's grannie caa'd her up and doon;
And gif her ain folk werena spairin',
Nae less unspairin' was the toon!

Yet finer bairn was ne'er begot;
They weighed him in auld Robbie's hat—
Twelve pund, doon wecht, o' wrastlin' Scot,
Red as his hair, and ringed wi' fat!

Auld Robbie did the christnin'; laith
To risk the puir bit laddie's sowl,
There, in the gloamin', by my faith,
He filled the lairgest parritch-bowl

Scottish Poems

Oot o' the stoup; then named him Rob;
Sprinklin' the water quick and snod;
Prayed a wee prayer to clinch the job—
Syne lippeden a' the rest to God!

Rob thrived; he thrived amang the dirt,
His daily rake the big ash-bucket;
Crawling the flure in his bit shirt,
Whiles he was kissed, but often whacket!

Toddled he then frae chair to chair,
Wi' here a clutch and there a clour;
Grat when the dunt was unco sair—
Then smiles cam' skinklin' thro' the shoo'er!

Syne to the schule: baith prood and blate;
Saut tears no' far frae ilka e'e;
Robbie to guide him to the gate—
And in his pooch a new bawbee!

Wrastled he there wi' raivelled pirns,
As ne'er he wrastled wi' his parritch;
Tholed the black taws wi' smothered girns,
As ne'er he tholed the Shorter Carritch!

Playtime he liked far mair than books;
Peeries and bools, ilk in their turn;
Socht linties' nests in canny nooks,
Or guddled trooties in the burn.

The Unwelcome Bairn

Rob was nae gowk; swift were his ways
Wi' hand and head when deftly needed;
But as for prizes, or for praise—
He lauched, and let them gang unheeded!

Yet aye the Maister said that Rob
Was guid Scots stuff; when left alane
No' to be daured by ony job—
A dour bit lad to hold his ain!

.
And that was proved; for in the War
Rob gied the German lads a swatch
Of what a Scottish man could daur—
A serjeant in the auld Black Watch!

He stood his lane, stark at his post;
Sair wounded, yet he wouldna yield;
He held the trench when a' seemed lost—
And won high honour on the field!

The toon gaed daft when Rob cam' hame,
A row of ribbons on his briest;
And as a head-sheaf to his fame
Oor Provost, bless him, made a feast!

And Meg was there; mim as a nun,
Yet unco trig in her new goon;
She sat, beside her honoured son,
The proodest woman in the toon!

To a New Scots Author

(A Kailyard Reminiscence)

Saunders! you 're young and I am auld,
And Age is blate where Youth is bauld;
But yet, afore ye leave the fauld
 To seek your fortin',
Here 's twa-three words, baith het and cauld,
 O' plain exhortin'.

Nae doot, my lad, in Lun'on toon
There 's gowden plainstanes for your shoon;
Nae doot ilk kimmer wears a croon
 At kirk and market;
Yet faith! I 've kent an orra loon
 Slant hame half-sarkit!

Then wale your words, and watch your stap;
Aye keep a kist for ilka crap;
What though your wits are scant o' sap—
 That 's safe between us;
Dour hirslin' tak's ye to the tap
 Quicker than gen'us!

That Brag grows fat when Blate gangs stervin'
Is God's ain truth in my observin';

To a New Scots Author

Then praise yoursel', and your deservin'

Up hill, down dale;

Let modest men for patient servin'

Sup muslin-kail!

What though, in cadgin', curse and cuff

Come at your lug wi' ettled buff;

Seek help frae Heaven when men are gruff

And damn your trog—

But first seek them that write the puff,

And rowe the log!

Sic chiels, I 'm tel 't, noo rummage sair

To rout a gen'us frae his lair;

Lord, man, put up a wee bit prayer

That ane may catch ye;

For gif ye 're catcht—nine days or mair

There 's nane shall match ye!

Heth! but the hill-taps then shall bleeze

Frae Fleet Street to the Hebrides!

Then honest men shall tell Deil's lees

Withouten shame;

They 'll puff your squint, they 'll praise your
sneeze—

To speed your fame!

Then Saunders, lad, while Fortune ploos

Saw ye the seed; slip round the news

That you 're at hame for interviews

Baith day and nicht;

Scottish Poems

Till at your door, in flocks like doos,
The srievers licht!

Welcome sic gentry—cock and hen;
Smiles for the maids, drams for the men;
Tak' them your hoose-place but and ben
Wi' simple air;
Tell them the bonniest lees ye ken—
And they 'll tell mair!

Lord! but they 'll deave the world wi' skirling
The bits o' clash yoursel' set birling,
Till Heaven and John o' Groat's are dirling
As ne'er before;
Till publishers in droves come tirling
At your ha'-door!

Then keep scribe-scrievin', if you 're wice.
Saft greetin' tales, wi' sklents at Vice;
For Virtue comes and gangs in price
While Sin aye sells;
But, mind ye, close your screeds wi' rice
And mairrage-bells!

Tak' this advice—and faith, ere Lammas
The Deil be fried! but ye 'll be famous;
Then gie a thocht to your freend Tammas,
Honest though gruff,
And send him North, by way o' awmous—
Twa ounce o' snuff!

CHILDREN'S POEMS

To Ruth

Three Summers, my Sweet, is the bright way we
measure

That little white Path you have made with your
feet,

As down thro' the Meadows you danced in your
pleasure

Three Summers, my Sweet:

Thro' the Meadows of Time, with your quick
Heart a-beat,

Caught hither of Blytheness, sought thither of
Leisure

Your footsteps have wavered, now feeble, now
fleet:

While about you are Flowers, while above you is
Azure,

With Mother to shelter from Cold and from
Heat—

Lo! to-day you come crowned with God's sunniest
Treasure

Three Summers, my Sweet!

Changing Guard

I know I am not Sleeping,
 Though nurse put out the Light;
I think I am not Dreaming,
 Though mother said Good-night;
For I hear the sound of Feet,
 Marching Feet, marching Feet;
And I see the Guards come tramping, tramping,
 tramping,
I see the Guards come tramping down the Street.

Although this Room is silent
 I hear the Trumpets' blare;
Although I look at Blackness
 I see a Palace Square;
And I hear the sound of Drums,
 Merry Drums, merry Drums;
For the old Guard is jolly, jolly, jolly,
The old Guard is jolly when the new Guard comes.

I know I am not Sleeping,
 For now I hear a Shout;

Changing Guard

I know I am not Dreaming,
For the Guard wheels about;
And I hear the sound of Feet,
Slow feet, slow feet, slow feet:
Then the Bandsmen play up merry, merry, merry,
Then the Bandsmen play them merry up the Street.

In Kew Gardens

Beside a lake the Peacocks strut,
As if the Gardens were their own;
Upon the Grass, with one Eye shut,
A Pelican lies all alone.

He lies alone; he blinks and winks;
He only speaks the crossdest Words;
And I am certain sure he thinks
That Peacocks are the silly Birds.

He hears their Tails scrape on the Ground;
He sees them stagger in the Wind;
He thinks they just strut round and round
To show that they are Guys behind!

He says that Peacocks are too vain,
And vainest when they try to Speak;
He says they would not be so plain
If they had got a nice long Beak.

But round and round the Peacocks stalk,
Staring at him with perky Eyes;
'They do not heed such stupid talk—
'They *know* that Pelicans are guys!

Animal Town

In a Garden stands a Town
Where the Streets go up and down,
Up and down among the Flowers;
There I wandered hours and hours,
Hearing Beasts from picture-pages
Growl and roar in iron Cages.

There I found in every Street
All the Beasts that love to eat;
Beasts that gape behind the wire,
Beasts that eat and never tire;
Just at first I thought them needy,
Now I think they must be greedy.

'They love Nuts and they love Bread,
Though a Cake will do instead;
Yet a Lion will not take
Either Bread or Nuts or Cake;
But an Elephant can gobble
Loaves, without the leastest trouble!

Children's Poems

And an Elephant is nice
When you ride him more than twice;
But at first you want to cry,
'Cause his Back is very high;
And I could not just tell whether
He was made of creaky Leather.

On a Camel I can ride
If a Man walks at the side;
But a Camel is not nice
Though you ride him more than twice,
For his Back is very humpy,
And his Saddle jumpy-jumpy!

Though the Bears are not so tall
Yet I like them best of all;
I could ride upon the Back
Of the white Bear or the black;
Straight and steady I would sit them,
And I'd promise not to hit them.

Through the Garden of this Town
I went racing up and down;
And I'll go there every Day
If the Beasts will come and Play—
Come and play like picture-pages
'Stead of growling in their Cages.

At the Horse Guards

The horses' Heads wag up and down
And make their shining Chains go clink;
The horses' Feet bob up and down,
But yet the Horsemen never wink;
These Scarlet Twins sit very still
And think and think.

The horses like to wag their Heads,
Because it makes the Harness clink;
The horses like to bob their Feet,
But yet the Horsemen never blink;
These Scarlet Twins sit very tight
And think and think.

They never talk, or sing, or eat;
I 'm sure they never laugh or drink;
They stare and stare with both their Eyes,
With steady Eyes that never wink:
I *know* the Scarlet Twins were made
To think and think.

The Iron Soldiers

The Soldiers in my box at Home
Are made of painted Wood;
And when I lay them on the floor
They lie as Soldiers should;
They lie upon their backs and Smile,
For they are very good.

The Soldiers in this London Tower
Are not so nice as mine;
Their coats are not so jolly red,
Their Swords are not so fine;
A shiny Soldier is the best,
And all my Soldiers shine.

The Iron Soldiers in this Tower
Are stiff and tired and old;
I think they should lie down and rest;
I think they must be Cold;
When they are Cold it must be dull
For them to look so Bold.

The Iron Soldiers

I asked them to lie down and Rest,
Like Soldiers made of Wood;
To take their Helmets off and Smile,
As jolly Soldiers should:
My Nursie laughed; she heard them say—
They only wished they could!

The Cat's Friend

My tabby Cat has got a Friend
Who comes each day into our Street;
Each day he asks my Cat to spend
Two pennies for a little Treat—
'Smeat! 'Smeat!

And Toby loves this friendly Man,
He also loves the little Treat;
A faster Cat there never ran,
Than Toby, when he runs to meet—
'Smeat! 'Smeat!

And all the Cats that Toby knows
Follow this Man with hasty feet;
Follow this Man when off he goes
Shouting, with voice that sounds so sweet—
'Smeat! 'Smeat!

He likes all Cats to hear this Cry,
And he has Friends in every Street;
He likes them best when they can Buy,
He loves all Cats who live to eat—
'Smeat! 'Smeat!

Once upon a Time

What fun to climb the iron Stair;
What fun to get the frontest Seat;
To sit beside the Driver's Chair,
To watch the Horses at his feet:
He always had the fastest pair
Of all the Horses in the Street.

Their Heads they tossed, their Ears they twitched,
Their Shoes kept clamping up and down;
The Driver's Whip was tossed and switched
First at the grey Horse, then the brown;
Oh! it was fun when we were pitched
Upon a 'Bus through London-town.

The Driver's Face was always red;
The Driver's Laugh was always loud;
I *know* he loved to twist his Head
And talk to me—he was not proud;
He talked to me, but looked instead
Down at his Horses, and the Crowd.

Children's Poems

He made his 'Bus bob in and out,
And tried to pass the others by;
He shook the Reins and gave a Shout—
Then Laughed when he had won his try;
Always he jerked his Whip about,
For that, he said, made Horses spry!

The magic Streets went buzzing past,
The Streets that never made a stop;
When we went fast the Crowd went fast,
And faster went each painted Shop;
I hoped the Day would always last
When I went riding on the Top!

White Horses

I saw them plunging thro' the Foam,
I saw them prancing up the Shore;
A thousand Horses, row on row;
And then a thousand more!

In fear they leapt upon the Land,
In fear they fled before the Wind
Prancing and plunging, as they raced—
The Huntsman raced behind.

When this old Huntsman goes to sleep,
The Horses live beneath the Waves;
They live at peace, and rest in peace
Deep in their sea-green Caves.

But when they hear the Huntsman's shout,
Urging his Hounds across the Sea,
Out from their Caves in frenzied fear
The great White Horses flee!

To-day they plunged right thro' the Foam,
To-day they pranced right up the Shore,
A thousand Horses, row on row;
And then a thousand more!

The Silver Road

Last night I saw a Silver Road
Go straight across the Sea;
And quick as I raced along the Shore
That quick Road followed me.

It followed me all round the Bay,
Where small Waves danced in tune;
And at the end of the Silver Road
There hung a Silver Moon.

A large round Moon on a pale-green Sky,
With a pathway bright and broad—
Some night I shall bring that Silver Moon
Across that Silver Road!

The Painted Ships

The Road that goes right round the World
Runs past our Garden-wall;
I see the Ships sail up and down,
I hear the sailors call.

The painted Ships pass up and down
And churn the Road all white;
I watch their bobbing Flags by day,
I count their Lamps at night.

I watch to see my Father come
Right up the Water-road;
He went for Gold, and Mother says
He 'll bring a jolly Load.

For best of all is Father's Ship—
His Ship, and all his Men;
And this old Road right round the World
Shall bring him Home again.

A Sea-Greyhound

Down green Hollows, and over green Hills,
Through thickets of tangled Foam,
The great Sea-Greyhound has held away
In a long chase Home.

Over the Ocean, thro' dark and clear
She raced where the black Winds ride;
And to-night I saw her, slow and tired,
Pant up with the Tide.

Slow and tired, with a Sound as of Sobs,
In the dark she glided past;
For the great Sea-Greyhound had won her way
To the Port at last.

A Voyage

Two Sailors boldly put to Sea,
On board their own brave craft;
These Sailors two were a daring crew,
And their Ship was a jolly raft.

Two Sailors launched their Ship of planks,
Tied tight with ropes together;
And over the Pond, to the Lands beyond,
They sailed in the summer weather.

Two Sailors steered across the Deep,
With two long Poles they steered;
Though Rocks were nigh and the Waves ran high,
These Sailors were never afeared.

They bravely steered and wildly cheered—
Till they chanced on stormy Weather;
When the Ship was lost, and the Crew were
tossed
Plump into the Pond together!

The Crimson Country

Ere yet the Lamp is lit—
 When I of reading tire,
When Shadows flit and flit—
With head on hand I sit
 Before the crimson Fire.

Strange people there I see,
 In places just as strange;
Bright Palaces there be;
Red Knights that beckon me—
 With change that follows change.

A fiery Castle goes,
 And leaves a Lion's den;
A flaming Banner blows
Where grew a crimson Rose—
 Then all is changed again.

With head on hand I sit
 Before the magic Fire;
Deep in the midst of it
I see the fair Things flit—
 The Things of Heart's desire.

The Plum-pudding Dream

I dreamed a dream on Christmas Night
Of a Hero stout and bold,
A gallant little English lad,
Who captured a pirates' Hold;
He captured the Hold, he slew the Chief,
And loaded his ship with gold.

He shipped the Gold, and shaped a course
For the gory Spanish Main;
Boarded the Plate-ship, sword in teeth,
And hauled down the flag of Spain;
The proud Dons promptly walked the plank—
As the dream cruised on again.

The dream cruised thro' a dark Forest
Whereout there came a scream:
"St. George!" the Hero cried, "St. George!"
And quick his Sword did gleam;
Six Paynims died, the Maid was saved—
Then onward went the dream.

Children's Poems

The dream went on with Helm a-port,
Till it struck an Indian trail;
The Hero said " I 'll have their Scalps,
Sure as a ninepenny nail;"
He had their scalps in Dead Man's Gulch—
And again the dream set sail.

The dream set sail with Helm a-lee
Till the French fleet hove in sight;
Ten thousand line-of-battle Ships
On a bowline, cleared for fight;
" I 'll sink the lot," the Hero cried;
So he sank the lot all right.

And still the Hero cruised and cruised
Where Gold and Fights were rife;
With Spear and Gun, with Axe and Sword
Men sought that Hero's life;
Yet Home he came, all Scars and Fame,
And wedded the usual Wife.

On Christmas Night I dreamed that dream;
But when the Morning came
No single word of it was True—
Which was a jolly shame;
For everything that Hero did
I could have done the same!

Sky-Children

All little Children, when they die,
Are taken up behind the sky.

Yet these Sky-children keep in mind
The little children left behind:
So, when the Angels put to bed
Each weary, nodding Sleepy-head,
And draw the great Sky-curtains tight
And bid the Little Ones good-night—
These mindful Children, e'er they sleep,
Make Pin-holes in the Sky, and peep
Down at the Earth; that they may mark
The Child that looks up through the Dark.

I know that what I say is true,
For when they peep the light shines through!

Nut-Gatherers

Hark! how they chatter
Down the dusk Road;
See them come patter,
Each with his load.

What have you sought, then,
Gay little Band?
What have you brought, then,
Each in his hand?

No need to ask it;
No need to tell;
In Bag and in Basket
Your Nuts show well!

Nuts from the Wild-wood;
Sweet Nuts to eat;
Sweetest in Childhood
When life is sweet!

There they go patter,
Each with his load;
Hark! how they chatter
Down the dusk Road!

The Man they Made

We made a Man all by ourselves;
We made him jolly fat;
We stuck a Pipe into his face,
And on his head a Hat.

We made him stand upon one leg,
That so he might not walk;
We made his mouth without a tongue,
That so he might not talk.

We left him grinning on the Lawn,
That we to bed might go;
But in the night he ran away—
Leaving a heap of Snow!

What the Weather Does

The Rooks are alive
On the tops of the trees;
They look like a hive
Of jolly black bees:
They are squawking together
And loud is their squawking—
It must be the Weather
That sets them a-talking.

A Lark in the sky
Climbs up as it sings;
I watch it soar high
And wish I had wings;
The Birds sing together
With merry notes ringing—
It must be the Weather
That sets them a-singing.

The frost and the snow
Have gone from the lane;

What the Weather Does

They both had to go
When the Sun came again;
They skulked off together,
As out I came prancing—
It *must* be the Weather
That sets me a-dancing.

The Upside-Down World

I know a place that holds the Sky,
A place where little white Clouds lie;

The edge is all as green as grass,
The middle is as smooth as glass;

And there the round Sun makes his Bed;
And there a tree stands on its head;

Sometimes a Bird sits on that tree;
Sometimes it sings a song to me;

And always in that shining place
I see a little smiling Face;

She nods and smiles; but all the same
The Girl down there won't tell her name!

A Request

Mavis piping on the Tree,
Piping to this little Lad,
Speckled Mavis, may it be
That your Song shall cause to flee
All the things that make him sad.

Mavis on the frozen Bough,
Piping to this ailing Lad,
Speckled Mavis, tell him how
Spring shall come; yea, bring him now
Spring-time, that he may be glad!

The Robin's Friend

Came a Robin to the Pane;
Fluttered—flew—but came again;
Perched he there upon the Snow,
Keen to stay, but quick to go;
Peered he in with Head awry,
Cold of Wing, but bright of Eye.

When was ope'd that Window-pane
Off he flew—but came again;
Came across the Window-sill
Hopping, hopping, brave of Will;
Since the Cold had made him tame,
In with ruffled Wing he came.

Went that Robin thro' the Pane,
When the Sun shone out again;
Happy thoughts that Robin had
Of an ailing little Lad,
Who had saved him from the snow,
Who had loved—but let him go!

The Sick Wind

Why is the Wind so ill to-night?

What makes the Wind complain?

In Bed I lie, and hear him sigh,

Outside the Window-pane.

Why is the Wind so sad to-night?

What makes his Cry so shrill?

He comes and goes, he sobs his Woes,

His voice is never still.

All round the House, and round the House

He takes his weary Moan;

The night is cold, the Wind is old—

A tired old Wind and lone.

He goes and comes with silent Feet,

He sobs amid the Rain:

Dear God, be kind to this sick Wind,

And make him well again!

Down the Lane

Down the Lane there lives a Cow,
In the field beyond the Corn;
Star she has upon her Brow,
And a crook upon her Horn.

There she lies upon the Grass,
Near the Trees where it is cool;
There she stares each time I pass
Slowly, on my way to School.

For I love to climb the Gate,
Love to watch her great brown Eyes;
And the more I wait, and wait,
She the longer looketh wise!

There she lies and Eats, and Eats;
But a Bite she *never* takes!
And I think it must be Sweets,
For I know it can't be Cakes.

Apple-tree Snow

In our old Garden you may see
The strangest kind of Apple-tree:

For though the Sun shines all the day
And Summer-time has come to stay;

Yet this queer Tree has made to grow
On every branch a wreath of Snow;

And when the Wind makes little shakes,
The Snow drops down in little flakes;

I wonder does the Tree forget
That this is not the Snow-time yet?

In Heathen-land

I wish I lived in Heathen-land,
Where all my Sunday Pennies goes;
For then I 'd play, 'most all the Day,
And never wear no clothes!

Nurse says I am a careless Lad,
The very carelessest she knows;
She thinks that Trees, and Nails, and Grease,
Are not the best for Clothes!

Nurse says that I shall be her death,
For every night she sews and sews;
She thinks a Boy should take a joy
In keeping nice his Clothes.

I wish I lived in Heathen-land,
Where all my Sunday Pennies goes;
For then I 'd climb 'most all the Time
And never tear no Clothes!

The Other Me

He goes beside me in the Sun;
And he is dark, though I am fair;
Both when I walk, and when I run,
The Other Me is always there!

I often tell him Things I know,
But not a word has he to say;
Yet still he goes the Roads I go,
And likes to play the Games I play.

Sometimes the Other Me is Tall,
And stretches far, far down the street;
Sometimes the Other Me is small,
And tries to hide beneath my feet!

Last week the Other Me was lost,
One bad day when it rained and blowed;
He hid when he was wanted most,
But where he went I never knowed.

He came back when the Lamp was lit;
I saw him dance across the floor,
And jump into my Bed and sit;
How queer I never heard the Door!

Bed-time

Why is it time to go to Bed,
Just when I want to stay?
Nurse would be nicer if she said:
“ Keep right on with your play!”

Why should my play be ever done?
Why should I sleep a wink?
To go to bed is not such fun
As grown-up People think!

A Rainy Day Rime

Why are the Yesterdays all dry?
Why is To-day all rain?
I hope God puts the bright Days by,
To send them back again!

Where go the good Days when they end?
Why do they never stay?
I often wish that God would send
A nice bright Yesterday!

The Weather Clerk

I know who makes the Weather shine,
I know who makes the Weather snow;
It 's one of Father's clerks, because
My Nursie told me so.

He put the Weather in a Clock,
And hanged it high upon the Wall;
I need a Chair to see, because
The Weather-Clerk is tall.

Then every morning Father knocks,
To make the Clock go up and down:
He smiles when it is up, because
That makes it nice in Town.

Friendship

Santa Claus came here last night,
Came softly without knocking;
He brought a Doll for little May,
And pinned it to her stocking.

Little May bounced out of Bed;
Clasped gaily her new Dolly;
And as she kissed and called it Sweet
Forgot her old Dolls wholly.

Sally Rag, her old plain friend,
No more had gifts or graces;
All day she praised Aminta's charms,
And hugged Aminta's laces.

Little May now lies in Bed;
But e'er she sought Dream Valley,
She flung Aminta on the Floor—
And went to sleep with Sally!

A Mystery

The Tide creeps down, and down, and down,
Till all the black Rocks show;
I see it sink; and think, and think,—
Where *do* the Waves all go?

The Tide crawls up, and up, and up,
Till not a Rock is seen;
Still on the shore, I ask once more,—
Where *can* these Waves have been?

I asked my Nurse; I asked and asked;
Till hot she said: “ Oh drat!
The Tide ’s the Tide, do let it bide ”:
Now, was there sense in *that*?

An Old Song

Where sunlight sets its latticed gleams
On oaken walls adance
There Doris sits; there Doris dreams
Of mirth and old romance.

For while she plies the spinet's keys
And hums an ancient song,
She sees, thro' ruddy light she sees,
The hall with guests athrong.

She hears the viol's tender note
Lead forth the trembling flute,
To set with grace the light gavotte
For dancers blythe of foot:

Nor wots the maid that earth is boon
With songs as bright to-day;—
"T is still for youth a wistful tune
That once the world was gay.

So Doris dreams that bliss befell
When this old song was new;
Ah! round these walls grim faces tell
How mirth was worn with rue!

GLOSSARY

- | | |
|---|---|
| Abin, above. | Dowie, dreary. |
| Ane, one. | Dreich darg, heavy toil. |
| Argy-bargy, an earnest dis-
putation. | Drouthy, thirsty. |
| Ash-baket, a cinder re-
ceptacle. | Dunt, knock. |
| Avizandum, for further con-
sideration. | Dwam, faintness, half-con-
sciousness. |
| Awmous, alms. | Ettled, intended, attempted. |
| Banes, bones. | Fash, slight trouble. |
| Bauchles, old shoes. | Fauld, fold. |
| Bauld, bold. | Faur, far. |
| Bigg, build. | Fecht, fight. |
| Birl, to whirl, to go round. | Flyte, a wordy quarrel. |
| Blate, shy, diffident. | Fou, tipsy. |
| Boddle, a small coin. | Forgethered, come together. |
| Boss, empty. | Forjesket, weary, jaded. |
| Bowff, bark. | Fyke, to worry over trifles. |
| Buirdly, big, strong. | Gang, go. |
| Camstrurie, froward. | Gash, self-important. |
| Canty, cheerful. | Gate o't, way of it. |
| Carritch, catechism. | Gean, wild cherry. |
| Cauld, cold. | Gey, very. |
| Clash, gossip. | Glaiket, silly, thoughtless. |
| Collyshangie, asharp squabble. | Gleg, sharp. |
| Core, a friendly company. | Glower, stare. |
| Couthie, comfortable. | Goon, gown. |
| Cowes the Cuddy, unusual,
passing strange. | Gowans, daisies. |
| Crack, friendly talk. | Gowk, a foolish person. |
| Cranreuch, hoar frost. | Grat, wept. |
| Croon, crown. | Greet, weep. |
| Daidle, dwaddle. | Groat, fourpenny coin. |
| Daunder, to wander slowly. | Gyte, foolish. |
| Deave, deafen. | Hairst, harvest. |
| Deil Belicket, a mere ex-
clamation. | Haivers, silly gossip. |
| Dirl, fidget, vibrate. | Half-sarket, in poverty. |
| Dook, bathe. | Hantle, much. |
| Doos, pigeons. | Het, hot. |
| Dowff, spiritless. | Hirstle, to move with diffi-
culty. |
| | Hoolets, owls. |
| | Hough, thigh. |
| | Howff, meeting place. |

Glossary

Ilk, Ilka, each.
Jaggie, prickly.
Jingo-ring, a children's round game.
Jink, to evade cleverly.
Jouk, to stoop quickly.
Kent, known.
Kist, a chest.
Kitty, jack.
Laith, loath.
Laverock, lark.
Lawin', reckoning.
Lees, lies.
Leeze me, dear to me.
Lift, sky.
Lintie, linnet.
Lippened, trusted.
Lowe, flame.
Lown, sheltered, peaceful.
Lugs, ears.
Mair, more.
Mensfu', thoughtful, sensible.
Muckle, big, much.
Muslin-kail, watery soup.
Neist, next.
Nick-nackets, curiosities.
Orra, odd, occasional.
Pawky, sly, shrewd.
Peeries, spinning-tops.
Peesweep, the lapwing.
Penny-fee, wages, reward.
Pickle stoor, a little dust.
Ploy, a game or frolic.
Plunk, to play truant.
Poopit, pulpit.
Pouch, pocket.
Puggies, monkeys.
Quat, quitted.
Redd, to put in order.
Rin, run.
Rowth, plenty.

Sairly, sorely.
Saut, salt.
Scaured, scared.
Shilpit, pale and sickly.
Shoon, shoes.
Smeddum, spirit, mettle.
Snell, bitterly cold.
Snod, neat.
Soopit, swept.
Soople, active.
Spate, flood.
Speer, ask.
Speil, climb.
Splore, a frolic.
Spurkle, a stick for stirring.
Steered, stirred.
Steerin', stirring.
Steeve, stout.
Sticket, failed.
Stotterin', staggering.
Stoup, a wooden water-vessel.
Swatch, sample.
Taws, a schoolmaster's lash.
Theekin', thatching.
Thick and thrang, very busy.
Tholed, endured.
Thowless, strengthless.
Thraw, to twist or squabble.
Tint, forsaken, lost.
Tirlin', knocking.
Trig, neat.
Trog, wares.

Unco, unusual, strange.

Wale, pick.
Waur, worse.
Wersh, savourless, uninteresting.
Wice, wise.

Yammer, grumble.
Yerks, jerks.
Yett, gate.
Yill, ale.

